1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
A W32 Gond A W32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

PREFACE

THE Administration of Bastar State has generously subsidized the publication of this book, and for this practical sympathy I must thank Colonel Meek, the Agent to the Governor-General for the Eastern States, and Mr. E. S. Hyde, I.C.S., Administrator of Bastar State. I hope that it will not be the last book to be written about the Marias. More systematic field-work will without doubt correct and supplement many of my statements; I shall be content if my book tempts any trained worker to visit the ethnologically unexplored lands of Bastar and Jeypore.

My four years as Administrator of Bastar State kept me busy in camp and office with administrative problems of all kinds. The primary object of my enquiries was to ascertain grievances, especially those caused by the adoption in a primitive State of criminal, civil and revenue laws framed for British Indian districts some centuries more 'advanced'. In getting the aboriginal to show me his house and his possessions, in watching his domestic and agricultural routine, and in attending his simple social and religious ceremonies I found the readiest path to his confidence and to appreciation of his real feelings about the administration. Question begat counter-question, and attempts to explain the domestic life of the English to Marias were interesting and amusing. If because I was primarily an administrator I have sometimes dwelt at length on administrative problems, I do not repent: for, despite such views as those advanced by Mr. N. M. Joshi and Mr. M. S. Aney in the Indian Legislative Assembly debate of February 18th, 1936, on the areas to be wholly or partially excluded under the recent Government of India Act, when they heartily damned all anthropologists as wishing to keep the primitive races of India 'uncivilized' and 'in a state of barbarism' as raw material for their science and 'in order to add to their blessed stock of scientific knowledge', anthropology has a very practical value to all charged with the administration of other races if it can discover the thoughts and need of those races. The results of the divorce of administration from anthropology as seen in the system of land revenue, police and judicial administration applied to the Maria tracts of Bastar have been as strikingly revealed on a larger scale by the post-1919 attempts in Bombay and the Central Provinces to force prohibition upon the Bhil, the Gond and the Korku.

Few now are the regions of India where the white man is unknown, and fewer still those in which the Hindu has not yet

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

primitive education. Havelock Ellis would, I think, have found much to interest him in the sexual relations of the boys and girls of primitive societies, but he too seems to have considered the existing literature as lacking in detail and authority. 114

Yet—as a glance at this book will show—the ghotul, and presumably the village dormitory elsewhere, provides the most important evidence for any discussion on group-marriage, group-concubinage, pre-nuptial chastity, pre-nuptial infertility, experimental marriage, the union of near kin and the value of the rules of exogamy. For the general reader, uninterested in technical anthropological problems, the ghotul raises equally interesting questions about co-education, the influence of punishment, the expediency of marriage between those who have grown up together, the relegation of parental responsibility, the relation of discipline and freedom, and the elimination of jealousy. It opens up the widest problems of sex and marriage; and even though Muria society may not provide solutions, it does at least put the questions.

The ghotul does not yield up its secrets readily. It is easy enough to obtain a superficial knowledge of its organization, but the Muria have no conscience at all about misleading the inquirer, and it is almost routine for them to give incorrect information at first. They invariably deny—if you ask them questions—that chelik and motiari have intimate relations; they told Grigson that girls never slept in the ghotul of the Narayanpur Tahsil; I have often been wearied by their lies. Every statement must be weighed and checked; the anthropologist has to be both a detective and a magistrate; he must be ready to follow the slightest clue, but he must test with the greatest care the evidence that is put before him. 123

We must not blame the Muria for their reticence. It is the natural and proper barrier set up against prying eyes; it is their ultimate refuge against the inroads of civilization. Moreover chelik and motiari are bound to secrecy, to conceal everything not only from the stranger but from their own relatives, when they are admitted to the ghotul fellowship.

How then was it possible to gather the vast amount of detailed information presented in this book? The answer is simple; the Muria cannot resist affection. They are the most friendly people in the world—once you have learnt how to set about them. They immediately respond to respect. For years they have been scolded, peered at, ridiculed by every visitor to their villages; their first reaction to a newcomer is naturally to throw up a barrier of reticence and falsehood. But directly they find that the visitor knows something about them and likes what he knows, there is a wonderful change and he is overwhelmed with intimacies.

I first visited the Muria country in 1935, and repeated my visits for several years till 1942. In 1940 I was appointed Census Officer of Bastar State and a little later Honorary Ethnographer with the status of a Head of a Department—a position that greatly facilitated my inquiries. In an Appendix I give a list of all the ghotul in the State, and note those that I visited personally and what I saw. I have also recorded those which I was not able to visit myself, but about which I believe I have exact and authentic information—information collected by more than one of my colleagues and which has stood the test of check and counter-check. It seems to me essential that an ethnographer should present his credentials in as precise a manner as possible and should confess his failures. I must admit, for example, that I have not lived in the Muria area during the rains. I have personally witnessed, however, at least examples of everything described in the book, and the total number of ghotul visited comes to no fewer than 347. 114

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

114 live side by side with Kolams as well as with non-aboriginal settlers, then climbed to the higher plateau and were fortunate enough to watch a clan-god feast at Pangri. On our way from Pangri to Utnur we passed Marlavai and decided on this village as our future base-camp. Early [54] in February we went to the Keslapur Jatra, a great Gond feast and fair, held annually fifteen miles north-west of Utnur. From there we turned north and then east into Rajura Taluq, where we visited tht famous fort of Manikgarh, now deserted and overgrown by jungle. Camping in [129] various villages of the higher plateau we gathered piecemeal information from both Gonds and Kolams, and by the end of our tour realized that a study of the aboriginals of Adilabad might lead to the very heart of the Gond problem.

123 A slightly embarrassing circumstance during our first tour was the rapidly spreading rumour that I was a recruiting officer and had come to take young Gonds to the war. The general excitement following the Japanese invasion of Malaya, had reached even the Gonds and they interpreted my taking of notes and photographs as a preliminary selection of all the fittest men. And when at the same time the Director-General of Revenue visited Adilabad and Utnur, they took our tours for a concerted movement and thought the lorries with his camp-kit were meant to carry off the recruits. Many hid in the forest and the fields when we passed by and in the villages it was difficult to establish confidence.

But once settled in Marlavai in a house built in Gond style just outside the village, we were soon faced by a difficulty of exactly the opposite nature. For now rumour ran that I was a revenue officer, specially sent to the District to investigate the grievances of Gonds, Kolams and Naikpods, and to give land to all those whom the influx of new settlers had rendered landless. All through the hot weather and the greater part of the rains aboriginals from all parts of the district, some in delegations of thirty and forty, flocked to Marlavai, all wanting their difficulties heard and remedied. Unable to give them any concrete assistance, I had at least to listen to their tales of woe, and many a day passed when the only anthropological information swelling my note-books was the distressingly monotonous account of a culture-contact resulting invariably in the expropriation and economic enslavement of the aboriginal.[1]

114 From March to the middle of December Marlavai was our headquarters, but several tours led us to the surrounding villages and ultimately to the Tilani area as far as Rompalli and Mangi. We left the district at Christmas and returned again early in March 1943, when we toured the taluqs of Both. Kinwat and Adilabad, reaching Marlavai in the middle of April. While in Hyderabad I had succeeded in obtaining the sanction of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for a Gond Education

1. A full account of the conditions then prevailing in the Adilabad District is contained in my reports and diaries published under the title *Tribal Hyderabad* by the Revenue Department, Government of H.E.H. the Nizam, Hyderabad 1945.